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ABSTRACT

Many debate textbooks give few examples of well structured arguments, and often the examples which the books do give are inconsistent with current debate practice. All too often, young debaters learn how to structure and deliver arguments from more experienced teammates, or even from debate competition opponents. The clearest example of uncertainty regarding argument structure and burdens is the argument for resolutional rather than example focus. The resolutional focus argument usually is made by the negative team, in the form of a claim that the affirmative has failed to affirm the resolution in general. By using the relatively common topicality argument as a model, negative debaters who choose to advocate resolutional focus may clearly indicate what the affirmative should do, how the affirmative has failed to do so, and why the failure matters. Some judges, coaches, and debaters deride negative teams who advocate resolutional focus arguments. Sometimes such negative arguments are so poorly developed and explained that they amount to complaints about the inability to apply negative arguments to affirmative examples. However, resolutional focus arguments can be well reasoned and well developed explanations of the gap between an affirmative claim and appropriate argumentative requirements. (Forty-five references are attached.) (SG)

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The "Whole Resolution" as a Negative Theoretical Argument: Pragmatic Considerations

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The "Whole Resolution" as a Negative Theoretical Argument: Pragmatic Considerations [1]

Shortly after the conclusion of a panel sponsored by the CEDA Division at the 1990 Speech Communication Association Convention in Chicago, a panel of which I was a member, I asked an outstanding debater who was present what he thought of the proceedings. (He was, to my knowledge, one of only two undergraduates present at that presentation.) I no longer remember his exact reply, but I believe that I can still correctly paraphrase a portion of it: "I was impressed, but we [debaters] have to live with the implications of what you coaches write."

Unquestionably, many debaters are likely to make arguments in ways which are consistent with what they hear from their coaches and read in journals and textbooks devoted to the theory and practice of academic debate. Young debaters are in many ways dependent on the writings of "debate theorists" in learning <u>what</u> to argue (e.g., value objections, topicality, justification), but, I would assert, rarely learn <u>how</u> to make those arguments. All too often, debaters learn how to structure and deliver these arguments from the examples of their more experienced teammates, or even from their opponents in debate competition. Many textbooks give few examples of well structured arguments, and often the examples which are given are inconsistent with current debate practice. [2] Unfortunately, while this inefficient system of instruction may work reasonably well for arguments on which there is a great deal of consensus on structure, such as topicality, this "learn-by-watching" method of instruction often fails when innovative debate theories are introduced. Uncertainty regarding argument structure results in widely varying conceptions from school to school and geographic region to geographic region of how a specific argument should be constructed and what burdens that argument must meet.

In my opinion, the clearest example of uncertainty regarding argument structure and burdens is the argument for resolutional focus rather than example (case or plan) focus. This resolutional focus argument usually is made by the negative, as the negative team claims that the affirmative fails to affirm the resolution in general. Instead, the affirmative only affirms some example of the resolution, which fails to satisfy the affirmative burden of proof. The different names for this position illustrate the ambiguity which surrounds the argument; it has at different times been called hasty generalization (Berube, 1984), whole resolution (Bile, 1987), and subtopical underjustification (Bile, 1988). While I find the subtopical underjustification label the most useful and descriptively appropriate, it is, unfortunately, the least-used label. I will use the phrase "resolutional focus" throughout this paper to refer to this genre of argument. In any event, it is doubtful that any widespread agreement exists regarding the description of an argument which does not even have a commonly agreed-upon name. A casual review of current debate practice verifies this claim. In the course of a single tournament, for example, I have heard it argued by one team that the negative whole resolution position

is inconsistent with the introduction of counter-warrants and by another team that the whole resolution argument can only be made when negative counter-warrants are also introduced!

An additional contribution to this conceptual muddle is a lack of community consensus on the appropriateness of resolutional focus in Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) Debate. While there appears to be a wide consensus in National Debate Tournament (NDT) policy debate that resolutional focus is inappropriate and that plan (example) focus is best for debate, no such consensus appears to exist in CEDA debate. Though counter-warrants and resolutional focus were once a subject of vigorous discussion in policy debate literature (Ganer, 1981; Herbeck & Katsulas, 1985a, 1985b; Keeshan & Ulrich, 1980; Paulsen & Rhodes, 1979; Rhodes, 1981; Rhodes & Pfau, 1985; Rhodes & White, 1986), these issues are now rarely mentioned except in the context of counterplan competition (Herbeck, Katsulas, & Leeper, 1989; Herbeck & Leeper, 1987). As Herbeck (1990) argues, "counter-warrants [which assume a resolutional focus] are a dead issue in policy debate. While one hears occasionally about the use of counter-warrants in the policy debate community, it would be unusual if counter-warrants were an issue in more than one or two rounds at any given tournament" (p. 2). However, one often hears arguments favoring resolutional focus in CEDA debates, and a lively debate over the appropriateness and utility of counter-warrants and resolutional focus continues to unfold in the value debate literature (Berube, 1984, 1989; Biggers, 1985; Bile, 1987; Jewell, 1988; Leeman & Hamlett, 1989; Madsen & Chandler, 1988; McGee, 1988; Murphy, 1990; Simon, 1984; Tolbert & Hunt, 1985).

While we are far from coming to any agreement regarding an optimal <u>theory</u> of resolutional focus, that will not be my concern in this paper. Instead, I will concentrate on improving the <u>practice</u> of resolutional focus advocacy. If debaters are going to continue arguing for the "whole res" while on the negative, it is clear that some debate "theorist" (and I have nominated myself for this task) should provide some instruction in how to make such arguments effectively. In order to limit this paper to a reasonable length, I will concentrate on the theoretical argument(s) for resolutional focus, and leave treatment of optimal counter-warrant organization and a complete discussion of the relationship between counter-warrants and resolutional focus argumentation for another time.

It is enough, for the purposes of this paper, to assume that arguments favoring resolutional focus exist, that some coaches, judges, and debaters find these arguments compelling, and that some debaters have chosen to make these arguments in debate rounds. How can these arguments best be structured and utilized by negative debaters? I will seek to answer this question by offering "practical" advice to debaters.

Prerequisites to Resolutional Focus

Few experienced debaters always make the same arguments in every debate in which they are negative. Every debate is unique to some extent, since affirmative case approaches vary widely and since individual judges sometimes prefer quite

different approaches to argumentation and "strategy." Before a negative debater makes the decision to argue in favor of resolutional focus, she or he should consider those features of that individual debate situation relevant to resolutional focus advocacy before making the argument.

Judge Considerations

The importance of adapting one's appeals to the specific audience at which those appeals are directed is widely acknowledged (Buckley, 1983; Ulrich, 1983). As Gill (1988) correctly noted, "skilled craftpersons begin a project with a recipient in mind. Debaters are no exception. Successful debaters prepare their message with their judge in mind" (p. 96). Ideally, debaters consider their critic before initiating any line of argumentation.

At least three considerations regarding the judge are important before initiating resolutional focus argumentation. First, is the judge willing to consider the argument? Even a quick glance at the judging philosophy booklets provided at the National CEDA Debate Tournament since 1987 reveal that many judges do not favor resolutional focus and/or counter-warrants (See Brey, 1989, 1990). If a judge refuses to consider those arguments or, at least, prefers not to listen to such arguments, then initiating resolutional focus arguments may not be in a debater's best interests. In contrast, if a judge prefers resolutional focus, then it may be a good idea for the negative team to make the resolutional focus argument, as long as the affirmative case only utilizes an example, or subset, of the resolution.

Second, will the judge punish the negative debater for "losing" the argument favoring resolutional focus? Some judges may feel that negative debaters who lose their own theoretical arguments should be "punished" with a loss. In other words, some judges may consider a theoretical argument an "all-or-nothing" proposition for the negative. While such judges are relatively rare in my experience, they may exist.

Third, does the knowledge-level and/or judging experience of the critic make resolutional focus argumentation inadvisable? "Lay" judges or the debaters of a previous generation who make a once-a-year appearance at college debate tournaments have never heard of resolutional focus or whole resolution, and will be taken by surprise when such a theoretical argument is made. If such a judge is present, it may not be in the debater's best interests to initiate resolutional focus argumentation.

Existence of a Violation

To many debaters, a case which is apparently an example of the resolution (i.e., a subtopical affirmative case) seems an obvious target for the negative whole resolution argument. However, careful affirmatives sometimes find ways in which to make their seemingly-narrow cases "wholistic." It is important to recognize that the argument for resolutional focus is post-definition. In other words, one can only determine if an affirmative case is an example of the resolution after the resolution has been defined [3]. If an affirmative selects broad

definitions and a narrow case area, then the "violation" of resolutional focus (see below) is apparent. This broad definition/narrow case situation is common in policy debate, where affirmatives wish to minimize the counterplan ground available to the negative, since it is usually presumed that negative counterplans must be non-topical. In CEDA, where plans and counterplans are relatively uncommon, I wonder why the strategies I identify next are not utilized more often.

Narrow definition. First, an affirmative team may use exceedingly narrow field context or dictionary definitions to make their case, which appears to be one example of the resolution, the **only** example of the resolution. For example, an affirmative team on the topic "Resolved: that continued U.S. covert involvement in Central America would be undesirable" might distinguish covert action from covert involvement, and argue that intelligence-gathering operations are the sole subject of the resolution. If their case then dealt only with intelligence operations, it would nevertheless be "wholistic."

Case as resolution. Second, an affirmative team may boldly argue that their case serves to operationally define the topic. In other words, their case "becomes the resolution!" Perhaps the sheer audacity of this affirmative strategy contributes to its in-round success. This argument is premised on the belief that the sole function of the resolution is to put limits on affirmative case selection. Once topicality is determined, the topic becomes irrelevant. For example, an affirmative team on the same Central America topic might construct a case specific to covert involvement in Puerto Rico, and then argue that their Puerto Rico example is now the "resolution," since the topic has now fulfilled its only function. The case then becomes the proposition which is debated. To many observers this practice seems absurd, and in many cases this practice appears to violate almost every rule of "reasonable" or "best" definition which has ever been envisioned. However, one must both argue that the resolution serves some other role besides that of a limitation on affirmative case selection and follow the advice in the next paragraph, or arguments about the irrationality of such definitional practices will not be relevant.

If a negative team faces a seemingly-narrow affirmative case which utilizes one of the strategies above to become wholistic, it becomes necessary to argue that some broader definition of the proposition is preferable before it can be argued that the affirmative violates resolutional focus. In other words, the negative must make definitional arguments which render the affirmative case subtopical (rather than non-topical) before resolutional focus argumentation becomes relevant. Further, if the affirmative team utilizes the case-as-resolution approach, one must argue for a different function of the resolution prior to the explanation of the negative violation of a resolutional focus standard.

Affirmatives who define themselves as the "whole resolution" in one way or another make negative resolutional focus argumentation much more difficult. Stated bluntly, this strategy gives the negative another opportunity to make an error regarding their own resolutional focus argumentation. If the stratagems

utilized by the affirmative make arguments favoring resolutional focus exceedingly difficult to win, the negative team might wish to adopt a different in-round strategy. The resolutional focus argument in these instances might be "more trouble than it's worth."

Structuring the Argument for Resolutional Focus

If any currently-used theoretical position provides a useful model for structuring resolutional focus arguments, it is topicality. A quick glance at argumentation and debate texts published since the 1970s leads one to conclude that most scholars writing on the theory of policy and non-policy debate agree that affirmative cases have to be topical. Numerous articles which focus on the practice of topicality have legitimated topicality as an issue (Madsen & Louden, 1987).

At the heart of the topicality claim is the belief that arguments made by affirmative debaters must fall within the limits of the topic. The authors listed below argue in one fashion or another that topicality is a "voting issue." In other words, the topicality claim is relevant to a judge because it suggests that the affirmative team has violated some useful theoretical "game rule" of debate. The topicality claim is considered prior to any other argument made in the debate round. If the affirmative team advocates a non-topical case, then, it is commonly argued, that team no longer "affirms" the resolution.

> If the affirmative were to lose topicality, it would lose the debate. Topicality, in other words, is the most basic requirement that it must satisfy (Patterson & Zarefsky, 1983, p. 112).
>
> If the affirmative position does, however, violate the territorial integrity of the negative, then the issue of topicality becomes a voting issue of the absolute nature (Jeffries, 1984, p. 94).
>
> Topicality is one of the few issues that carries an absolute impact. If the affirmative loses the topicality issue, it must lose the debate (Deatherage & Pfau, 1985, p. 5).
>
> It [topicality] seeks to determine whether the affirmative advocate has stayed within appropriate bounds. Or, more specifically, does the affirmative position fully meet the jurisdictional requirements imposed by the resolution? If not, the affirmative position should be rejected (Pfau, Thomas, & Ulrich, 1987, p. 153).

In addition to this consensus regarding the implications of topicality, it is also common to assert that a claim of affirmative non-topicality must include one or more standards (i.e., what criterion or criteria should be used to assess topicality) and one or more violations (i.e., how the affirmative violates that criteria). Intuitively, this model for topicality argument construction seems useful for other negative theoretical

claims, since this model (standard-violation-implications) provides a clear explanation of what the affirmative fails to do and what the results of this affirmative failure should be. This intuition is hardly original: "When setting up a counterwarrant as a negative advocate, you ought to prove the hasty-generalization argument first. In order to do that, simply argue standards, violations, and impacts, just as you do in a topicality argument" (Corcoran, 1988, p. 48). However, the adaptation of the resolutional focus position to this borrowed argument structure deserves further development. I will present below some potential resolutional focus standards, violations, and implications.

Standards

In my experience, standards are quite typically omitted from many negative arguments for resolutional focus. Sometimes even the most obvious of standards (e.g., the resolution IS the focus of debate) is not argued by the negative. Instead the negative abruptly proceeds to argue that the affirmative is a "hasty generalization." This argument assumes, unfortunately, that the resolution is the focus of debate without offering any justification for this assumption. [4] Also, in addition to this "meta-standard" for debate, many negatives fail to explain how an affirmative might adequately satisfy the requirements of resolutional focus. Three different rationales for resolutional focus and two standards for meeting resolutional focus requirements are explained below.

Community consensus. It is quite common to argue that the CEDA debate community as a whole prefers resolutional focus. Ulrich (1984) explains that "if anything, there is a dominant viewpoint that the entire resolution should be debated in CEDA, not just a part of the resolution" (p. 4). Tomlinson (1981) seems to rely on this assumption when he argues that

> CEDA has encouraged approaching the topic in a more direct manner. Debates should deal with the resolution as a whole rather than one particular (albeit significant) aspect. This does not mean teams shouldn't use examples or stress some particular aspects, but the resolution as a whole must not be relegated to only a minor part of the debate (p. 5).

Of the three arguments for resolutional focus which I discuss, the argument from community consensus is doubtless the weakest. First, this argument is typically asserted, usually with very little supporting evidence. To my knowledge, no comprehensive survey research on this subject has been conducted, at least in recent years. Second, as I notes above, even a casual survey of the judging philosophy booklets at the last several CEDA National Tournaments suggests that a substantial number of CEDA judges dislike resolutional focus arguments. Third, this claim is susceptible to the charge that it is an argumentum ad populum. The majority of the CEDA community, after all, may support the weaker position. Finally, like some other arguments made in favor of resolutional focus, the community consensus argument describes current debate practice or

preference without offering normative justifications for resolutional focus. In other words, the community consensus argument describes what **is** without offering reasons regarding what current practice **ought** to be. At least for this particular argument community, it seems that normative claims regarding the function of the resolution (and "debate theory" in general) should be much more compelling than arguments which merely describe current debate practice.

General education. A second argument for resolutional focus, which has been offered by Bile (1987), suggests that liberal and general education (which Bile argues are strongly linked) are best served by an wholistic approach to the resolution. Because the wholistic approach emphasizes broad concepts applicable to a wide range of similar problems, rather than very specific concerns rooted in unique circumstances in space and time; these specific concerns will not be relevant for more than a few months or years. Bile, in explaining this argument, has said that understanding and learning about the continuing problems of constructing a coherent African foreign policy, for example, are far more useful than are any number of debates about a few boreholes or other highly specific contemporary foreign policy problems which are unlikely to involve many persons or exist over a long period of time. [5]

Jewell (1988) and Madsen and Chandler (1988) have critiqued this position. Madsen and Chandler, for example, argue that the notion of general education embraced by Bile is highly abstract and wrongly precludes discussion of specific examples. They prefer instead a theory of general education which also emphasizes "specific applications" which would "increase understanding of the theoretical constructs that Bile would emphasize" (p. 32). One response to this position, of course, is that these specific applications of general knowledge are only useful if one keeps those "general principles" in mind. If debaters fail to demonstrate that an example-based affirmative case is an application of such general principles, then the Madsen and Chandler response seems problematic.

Language justifications. At least two language justifications have been advanced as rationales for resolutional focus. The better known argument is the "missing modifier" position, which is also associated with Bile (1987). Bile argues that, when no quantification modifier is present in a proposition (i.e., one, some, all, etc.), it is necessary to insert one of these modifiers in order to determine what burden of proof is placed on the advocates of that proposition. Bile claims that semantic "rules" and common practice suggest a preference for a generic modifier, such as "typically," "generally," or "most." [6] Madsen and Chandler (1988) argue in response to this claim that debate propositions are constructed differently than are claims made in everyday conversation, that generic propositions are controversial in the literature of philosophy, and that the conventions of formal logic are not consistent with the everyday reasoning practices of human beings. Even if one were to grant all these claims, however, Bile's position remains appealing in many respects. Madsen and Chandler's responses, it might be argued, beg the question of

which modifier to insert into the proposition. To argue that the affirmative debate team is only required to offer an example of the resolution may implicitly demand the insertion of the modifier "one" or "a few." It is possible to claim that the inevitability of modifier insertion requires debaters to make arguments for which modifier to insert. Herrick (1991) explains the importance of quantification modifier determination: "Identifying the extent of any generalization we are advancing, or being asked to accept, is important. . . . Until we know the extent of the generalization, we cannot know how well the sample supports the generalization" (p. 116). [7] Perhaps we should insert "one" or "a few" into the topic, but critics of Bile have not yet supplied any arguments favoring this position.

A second, relatively unknown justification for an wholistic affirmative approach was offered three years before the Bile article appeared by Ulrich (1984):

> When one supports a value topic one means that the topic, on balance, is true. If I say a school is good, I imply not that all characteristics of that school are good, but that, on balance, the school is good. To view value resolutions differently would lead to absurd conclusions. Hitler could be said to be a good man sine he was kind to a few friends. We could condemn a justice system because of one error. This is not how judgments are made about values in real life; instead value judgments are made by looking at the entirety of value implications. The same should be the case in CEDA (pp. 4-5).

Ulrich's argument, in summary, appears to suggest that a wholistic approach to the topic, in CEDA at least, is consistent with common-sense judgments regarding values and makes value debate more "real world."

In closing the section regarding standards, it appears to me that most of the normative arguments currently made by CEDA debaters advocating resolutional focus fall within the education or language justifications I have briefly summarized. However, these justifications sometimes differ somewhat from the positions taken by Bile and the other commentators on academic debate mentioned above, and the merits of individual arguments for resolutional focus are best measured separately. [8] In my experience, those arguments which do not fall into the education or language justification categories often resemble the descriptive claims which I critique above.

Violations

Once standards favoring resolutional focus are articulated, it seems reasonable to expect that the negative team should explain how the affirmative case violates those standards. At least two components of the violation explanation exist.

Example of a whole. First, the negative must demonstrate that the affirmative case is subtopical. This constitutes this minimum burden for a negative team making the subtopical underjustification theoretical argument. Only if the affirmative case justifies an insufficient portion of the topic does a

violation exist. When cases represent an obviously small portion of the topic (e.g., three M-16 rifles on a "military preparedness" topic), this component of the violation may seem obvious. However, as a precautionary measure, the negative team should determine that the affirmative is only an example within the bounds of the affirmative's own definitions or of negative counter-definitions. The demonstration of one resolutional focus violation might sound something like this:

> The affirmative defines Central America as "the region extending from the southern border of Mexico to the northern border of Columbia" but only deals with the country of El Salvador.

Inadequate evidence of typicality. A second, though less vital suggestion for the negative might be preemption regarding induction. One common tactic for affirmative teams responding to the resolutional focus argument is to make the claim that one might induce from the affirmative example to the "truth" of the resolution. Negatives may prepare for this argument in a few different ways. Some negative advocates of resolutional focus argue that induction itself is an inferior method of reasoning. [9] However, a more easily defended position is advocated by Bile (1987), who warns that anyone who utilizes induction would be required to demonstrate that their particular example satisfies applicable standards of inductive strength. These standards typically require that examples be sufficient in number and germane to the class of examples to which one is generalizing (Biggers, 1985; McGee, 1988). If the burden is on the affirmative team to demonstrate that their inductive argument (from example to resolution) is inductively strong, as Bile implies, then it becomes much more difficult for affirmatives to make the "induction" argument. Quite often a careful exploration of the warrants utilized by the affirmative to induce, for example, the general utility of covert action from one single successful covert action clearly exposes the weakness of that induction attempt. As Toulmin, Rieke, and Janik (1984) explain, "if we are forced to spell out the warrants on which our arguments rely and the backing on which those warrants depend, it will usually become clear at once when our grounds are based on too small a sample of cases or on examples that are quite untypical" (p. 154; emphasis in original).

Failure to provide adequate evidence that the inferential leap made from example to whole is justifiable is sometimes called the fallacy of hasty generalization. A slightly expanded version of the violation example offered above includes a consideration of potential affirmative claims regarding induction:

> The affirmative defines Central America as "the region extending from the southern border of Mexico to the northern border of Columbia" but only deals with the country of El Salvador. It would be the affirmative's burden to demonstrate that one could reason inductively from their example to the resolution with any degree of confidence.

Absent such a demonstration, the affirmative appears to commit the fallacy of hasty generalization.

It is occasionally argued that, absent a negative counter-example of the resolution (i.e., a counter-warrant), the affirmative example, however small or atypical, constitutes the only evidence regarding resolutional "truth." Bile (1987) provides a convincing response to this claim, however. Even if the negative fails to provide a negative instance of the resolution, the affirmative may lose the debate because their own arguments for the resolution are demonstrated to be inductively weak. Also, it is sometimes argued that counter-warrants are inconsistent with negative resolutional focus arguments. This argument also seems inadequate. First, a negative team may grant the possibility of induction and then argue that their negative example of the resolution provides an inductively strong (or, at least, stronger) claim regarding resolutional truth (see McGee, 1988). Second, the negative might utilize a counter-warrant which employs some other method of argumentation (deduction, etc.) to demonstrate that the resolution should not be accepted.

Implications

Once the negative team attempts to show that the resolution ought to be the focus of debate and demonstrates that the affirmative team fails to affirm a sufficient portion of the resolution, then, as with all other arguments, the negative team should explain the implications of the resolutional focus position. I will briefly summarize two commonly suggested implications of resolutional focus arguments.

Generics take precedence. This claim, made explicitly by Bile (1987) and implied by McGee (1988), suggests that arguments which are more "generic" and therefore, presumably, represent stronger induction efforts should be accepted in favor of less generic affirmative arguments. If "won" by the negative, this implication does not by itself require the dutiful judge to vote for the negative team, but does require the judge to give greater weight to the more generic counter-warrant, even if the less generic affirmative warrant has the more significant "impact." The more generic claim would provide the better evidence regarding the affirmative or negative character of the resolution. This implication justifies negative counter-warrants, but does not legitimize insignificant or atypical negative links to the resolution. After all, the "generics take precedent" claim delegitimizes insignificant or atypical affirmative links to the resolution!

Voting issue. While I have heard this claim disputed in some debate rounds, it seems apparent that many of the recent advocates of resolutional focus believe that affirmative example-based approaches are not justified and therefore may be rejected if the negative successfully advances the resolutional focus position. As Tolbert and Hunt (1985) argue, "topical justification suggests that should an affirmative present and win an example of the resolution, it still might not prove the resolution true" (p. 23). At the core of the voting issue position is the belief that, if the affirmative fails to argue a

compelling and argumentatively sound position for the affirmation of the resolution, the affirmative should be rejected for failing to meet this burden. In other words, the affirmative failure to justify the resolution, rather than some example of the resolution, requires that the "win" in that debate be awarded to the negative. If one accepts the notion of "proposition as claim" (Murphy, 1990), then the affirmative should not be rewarded with a victory if their arguments are insufficient to merit that claim.

Conclusion

My intent in writing this paper was to provide a useful framework for the construction of resolutional focus arguments by relatively inexperienced debaters. By using the relatively common topicality argument as a model, negative debaters who choose to advocate resolutional focus may clearly indicate what the affirmative should do (standards), how they have failed to do so (violations), and why that failure matters (implications).

In my experience, some judges, coaches, and debaters deride negative teams who advocate resolutional focus arguments by claiming that they should "go to the library" or "stop whining." It is doubtless true that some negative resolutional focus arguments are so poorly developed and explained that they are little more than indefensible complaints about their inability to apply their negative arguments to an affirmative example. However, resolutional focus arguments may also be closely reasoned, well developed explanations of the gap between affirmative claim and appropriate argumentative requirements. One wonders whether or not more thinking is spurred by careful preparation of a resolutional focus argument or by a (possibly futile) trip to a university library in the search for "negative" evidence on one, five, or a dozen microscopic affirmative cases.

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ENDNOTES

[1] It is difficult to subtitle one's paper "pragmatic considerations" without acknowledging an epistemological debt to the American pragmatist movement in philosophy. While the pragmatist project deserves more attention than I can give it here, Copleston (1985) provides a useful (if over-simplified) introduction:

> It is probably correct to say that in the minds of most people for whom the word 'pragmatism' has any definite meaning, it is associated primarily with a certain view of the nature of truth, namely with the doctrine that a theory is to be accounted true in so far as it 'works', in so far, for example, as it is socially useful or fruitful (p. 305).

I do not mean to imply, however, that pragmatism should be given a preferred position in philosophy. To the extent that "pragmatic philosophy has attempted to eliminate the impractical from thought, to frame questions which have practical consequences and nothing else," we should be careful to avoid the assumption that immediately "impractical" ideas ought to be summarily dismissed (Aronowitz, 1972, p. xvi). A dogmatic acceptance of pragmatic philosophy risks the virtual rejection of dialectic as critical inquiry and potentially renders calls for needed social change ineffectual.

[2] One exception to this unfortunate rule is found in the text recently released by Bartanen and Frank (1991), which, whatever its other strengths and weaknesses, generally provides useful examples of "block-writing" and argument structure.

[3] O'Dor (1990) criticizes several debate theorists for failing to understand that arguments focusing on the resolution must take into account the definitional system which determines resolutional boundaries. These theorists could easily be forgiven, however, since this point seems fairly obvious to those familiar with academic debate (the resolution has definitional boundaries which vary from debate round to debate round; these boundaries determine in part the appropriateness of theoretical argumentation). They saw no need to explicate this idea.

[4] Typically, negative topicality arguements also fail to satisfy this "meta-theoretical" burden (i.e., arguing that affirmatives must affirm at least some portion of the topic). Such a widespread judge consensus exists regarding this point, however, that affirmatives rarely seem to challenge this assumption.

[5] I refer here to a panel discussion involving Bile which was sponsored by the Cross Examination Debate Association at the Speech Communication Association Convention on November 1, 1990.

The contributions of Jeff Bile to the recent dispute over the function of the resolution in academic debate are

considerable. His 1987 CEDA Yearbook article is probably the leading article on the subject of resolutional focus published in recent years; the article has received considerable critical attention. He is clearly one of non-policy debate's leading theorists.

[6] It is interesting to note that many critics of the resolutional focus argument appear to believe that the phrase "whole resolution" requires the abused affirmative to prove that all instances of the resolution are affirmative. Mayer (1982) argues, for example, with regard to the counter-warrant, that "the counter-warrant . . . amounts to the negative discovering the most disadvantageous examples of the resolution. These disadvantageous forms of the resolution could well be ridiculous forms of the resolution which nearly no one would support" (p. 122). Steinfatt (1990, pp. 69-70) voices a related complaint: "As I understand this 'whole res' business, someone has apparently said in print somewhere that it is unethical, immoral, or possibly fattening, for the affirmative to fail to debate the resolution in its fullest sense, whatever that is. . . . Whatever is the fullest sense of the whole resolution?" I have never known an advocate of resolutional focus to make Mayer's argument (i.e., that the entire resolution must be defended by the affirmative), however, and the prevailing convention (at least in policy debate), which allows affirmatives to defend only one example of the resolution, seems equally vulnerable to this "absurd examples are bad" claim. An increasing awareness of the importance of quantification modifiers, "missing" or not, may have contributed in part to the placement of topics which include the phrase "on balance" on the CEDA topic selection ballot for Fall, 1990 and Spring, 1991.

Steinfatt's argument suffers from a similar misunderstanding of resolutional focus argumentation. I am not aware that any thoughtful advocate of resolutional focus has argued that the resolution has only one, true, whole meaning to which debaters must adhere. Rather, the meaning(s) of the resolution vary as they are advanced by different affirmative teams and challenged by negative debaters. I prefer to think that the resolutional focus argument implies that the general "truth" of the resolution ought to be at issue in the debate, rather than a focus on examples of the resolution which are unlikely to produce inductively strong arguments regarding the resolution as a general statement.

[7] Surprisingly, however, Herrick (1991) apparently fails to consider the possibility that a generalization may fail to make clear its own extent. He claims that "the extent of a generalization can be found in the generalization itself" (p. 116). However, some generalizations (and most of the propositions for debate adopted by CEDA in recent years) do not include quantification modifiers such as "all" or "thirty-three percent."

[8] I have deliberately chosen not to discuss one other common justification for resolutional focus--traditional debate

practice--because the arguments offered in opposition to this standard are quite convincing. Also, this argument from tradition makes the sort of descriptive claim which I critique above. As Rhodes and Pfau (1985), themselves advocates of resolutional focus, note:

> The long-term perspective of traditional practice seems to favor the resolutional approach, while the short-term perspective seems to favor the example approach. But in either case this argument from tradition is inclusive. First, . . . tradition may not be good per se. Second, the tradition argument depends not only on the age of the estimator but also on her/his experience with forensics, geographical location, and the type and level of debate in which the estimator is engaged (p. 147).

[9] Karl Popper's (1962) critique of induction is sometimes cited, although I personally suspect that Popper's alternative to induction and the current explanation of the logic of science, "conjectures and refutations," might be utilized as a defense of the example focus of many affirmative cases.